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The meeting was called to order at 3.20 p.m.

Agenda item 101: Permanent sovereignty of the Palestinian people in the occupied Palestinian territory, including Jerusalem, and of the Arab population in the occupied Syrian Golan over their natural resources (A/52/172-S/1997/71 and Corr.1)

1. **Ms. Al-Bassam** (Chief of the Regional Commissions New York Office) said that the question of the Israeli settlements in the occupied Palestinian territory, including Jerusalem, and in the Syrian Golan occupied since 1967 had been the subject of various resolutions of the Security Council and the General Assembly. The report now before the Committee had been prepared in response to resolution 1996/40 of the Economic and Social Council, dated 26 July 1996, in which the Council had requested the Secretary-General to submit to the General Assembly at its fifty-second session, through the Council, a report on the implementation of the resolution. The General Assembly had reiterated that request in resolution 51/190 of 16 December 1996. The report had been produced by the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) and was based on various sources, primarily recent publications and reports and information published in the Israeli and Palestinian press.

2. The report reviewed Israel's settlement activities in 1996 and stated that a number of settlements had been established and existing ones had been expanded. It further noted that settlement activities had been intensified in the Golan Heights since June 1996. There had been an increase in unemployment and a significant decrease of income, and Israel's settlement activities in 1996 would continue to create new geographic and demographic realities which posed serious impediments to the peace negotiations.

3. After considering the report now before the Committee, the Economic and Social Council had adopted resolution 1997/67 of 25 July 1997, in which it requested the Secretary-General to submit to the General Assembly at its fifty-third session, through the Council, a report on the implementation of the resolution.

4. **Mr. Jilani** (Observer for Palestine) said that the violation by Israel, the occupying Power, of the rights of the Palestinian people, including their right to sovereignty over their natural resources, had inflicted grave economic and social injustices on the Palestinian people and the Arab population of the occupied Syrian Golan. The report highlighted the worsening of the economic and social situation in the occupied Palestinian territory, including Jerusalem. In many respects the economic situation and living conditions were now worse than before the signature in 1993 of the Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements. Per capita income had fallen by nearly 50 per cent since that time. Unemployment rates had risen to between 50 and 60 per cent in 1997 and were still rising.

5. Furthermore, the Secretary-General's report submitted in accordance with General Assembly resolution ES-10/2 of 25 April 1997 (S/1997/494) described Israel's activities in Jerusalem and the rest of the occupied Palestinian territory and emphasized that Israel was continuing its illegal settlement campaign and was still confiscating land, expanding existing settlements, and building by-pass roads. Israel had also taken measures to impose additional changes in the character, demographic composition and legal status of Jerusalem. The report also made it clear that the principle of territorial integrity had been violated by the repeated closure of frontiers and the severe restrictions imposed by Israel on the freedom of movement of people and goods, which had caused a serious deterioration in the economic situation and living conditions of the Palestinian people.

6. The water shortage had worsened. Israel continued to steal and exploit the natural resources of the occupied Palestinian territory, including Jerusalem, and the occupied Syrian Golan, as well as damaging the environment. Such facts demonstrated not only the extent of the economic and social impact of Israel's policies on the Palestinian people but also the extent of its violation of international law and international humanitarian law and its flouting of the will of the international community, which had always affirmed the illegality of such policies and measures and the right of the Palestinian people to restitution of their natural resources and to full compensation for any exploitation or loss of such resources and for damage to them.

7. The General Assembly must continue to monitor such Israeli practices closely in an effort to bring Israel's conduct in the occupied Palestinian territory, including Jerusalem, and the occupied Syrian Golan into line with international law and ensure the protection of the Palestinian economy. The international community must take the necessary steps to promote an atmosphere conducive to peace by preventing the Israeli authorities from undermining or obstructing its assistance to the Palestinian people and by calling upon Israel to cease the strangulation of the Palestinian economy. It was time for Israel to understand that such policies must be immediately halted and reversed. It was impossible to speak of regional cooperation or entertain hopes that the regional economic summits would produce meaningful results as long as the destruction of the Palestinian economy

continued. In fact, it was difficult even to speak of peace while such an economic situation persisted.

8. **Mr. Abdellatif** (Egypt) said that the report before the Committee did not indicate the repercussions of Israel's occupation of Arab territories on the natural resources of the Palestinian people and the Arab population of the Golan Heights or the adverse economic and social impact of the policy of establishing settlements, confiscating land, and forcibly diverting water resources. The report was couched in general terms and only in paragraph 9 did it state that between mid-1992 and the end of 1996 the number of settlers in the occupied territories had risen from 107,000 to 150,000, while in paragraph 10 it stated that since Prime Minister Netanyahu had taken office 35 new decisions had been taken to expand settlement activities and that the establishment of 84 settlements in the West Bank had been announced.

9. All the resolutions of the General Assembly and the Security Council categorically condemned the measures taken by Israel in relation to the establishment of settlements and their serious economic and social repercussions on the Palestinian people of the occupied Palestinian territory. They all affirmed that the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War was applicable to the Arab territories occupied by Israel since 1967, including Jerusalem. Security Council resolution 465 (1980) of 1 March 1980 stressed the need for measures for the protection of public and private property and water resources.

10. The problem was accentuated because settlement activities not only affected natural resources, but also gave rise to confrontation in the occupied Arab territories and throughout the Middle East. At the tenth emergency special session, held by the General Assembly in April 1997 to consider the topic of illegal Israeli settlements, his delegation had stressed that those activities dealt a hard blow to Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), of 22 November 1967, and 338 (1993), of 22 October 1993, which constituted the basis of the peace process by mutual agreement. The General Assembly, in resolution ES-10/2, of 25 April 1997, adopted at its emergency special session, had demanded that Israel cease all those illegal activities in the occupied territories and called upon all countries to fulfil their obligations to ensure the implementation of the fourth Geneva Convention.

11. Just, full and lasting peace in the Middle East could not be achieved on the basis of the opinion of only one of the parties, but must be based on the opinion of all the parties to the peace process and on transparent principles which accorded with the relevant Security Council resolutions and with what had been agreed on at the Madrid Conference, namely the exchange of territories for peace.

12. **Mr. A'Ala** (Syrian Arab Republic) said that since June 1967, when it had occupied the Syrian Golan, Israel had been implementing policies and practices which openly defied the Charter of the United Nations, the principles of international law and international humanitarian law, and all the Security Council and General Assembly resolutions on the Middle East. It should be recalled that Israel had established the first settlement in the Golan Heights one month after the occupation, which clearly demonstrated its colonialist intentions.

13. The report before the Committee (A/52/172-E/1997/71 and Corr.1) gave examples of how Israel was continuing to implement its colonialist policies in violation of the norms and resolutions of the international community. However, it would have been desirable for the report to provide more specific information on Israeli practices in relation to the Syrian population of occupied Golan. Israel persisted in maintaining the occupation and expanding the settlements and was continuing to confiscate land and water and weaken the infrastructure of the Syrian people under occupation. It was also repressing all nationalist sentiments through harsh sanctions and was restricting the freedom of movement of the population. The occupation had also caused a serious shortage of educational and health services, grave economic difficulties and environmental damage as a consequence of the discharge of toxic waste in the Golan. Along with the situation of the population of the Syrian Golan there was the tragedy of the thousands of inhabitants of Golan who had been deported and hoped to be able to return.

14. That situation must be brought to an end and respect for the human rights and fundamental freedoms of the population of the occupied Syrian Golan must be ensured. Since the current Israeli Government had assumed power, the occupation policy in the Golan had been intensified. The Israeli Parliament had recently voted on a draft resolution supporting the occupation and rejecting the evacuation of the Golan, in clear defiance of Security Council resolution 497 (1981). The Jebel Abu Ghneim project was a clear example of that policy. The General Assembly, in resolution ES-10/2, had demanded the cessation of the construction at that site and of all other Israeli settlement activities. Later, in resolution ES-10/3, the General Assembly had condemned the failure of the Government of Israel to comply with the demands made in resolution ES-10/2.

15. As the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Syria had said in the general debate, the Arabs wished to achieve a just and

lasting peace, but if that option was to be realistic and enjoy popular support, Israel must withdraw from the occupied Syrian Golan, and from southern Lebanon and western Bekaa, in accordance with the relevant General Assembly resolutions, and the legitimate national rights of the Palestinians people must be respected, including their right to establish an independent State and to determine their own future. If the region was to enjoy peace, security and economic well-being, the spirit of aggression must be abandoned and the occupation of other peoples' land by force must be stopped.

16. **Mr. Marzuki** (Malaysia) said that his delegation was pleased that the General Assembly was considering the issue of the permanent sovereignty of the Palestinian people in the occupied Palestinian territory, including Jerusalem, and of the Arab population in the occupied Syrian Golan over their natural resources, as a separate agenda item. That clearly underscored the significance of the matter to the international community. His delegation hoped that the Committee would adopt a resolution which sent a clear and unambiguous message to Israel that the international community disapproved of its settlement policy in the Palestinian and other Arab occupied territories. Israeli policy and practices in that respect continued to imperil international peace and security.

17. Israel continued to defy the provisions of various Security Council resolutions, including resolutions 446 (1979) and 465 (1980), in which the Council had reaffirmed that the Israeli policy and practice of establishing settlements had no legal validity and also violated the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War.

18. The current Israeli Government had proceeded with the construction of a new settlement in Jebel Abu Ghneim, in East Jerusalem, defying the calls by the international community in General Assembly resolutions ES-10/2 and ES-10/3, adopted at its tenth emergency special session, which had been convened as a result of the failure of the Security Council to discharge its responsibility on the issue. The Israeli action had undermined the mutual trust which had been painstakingly built by the parties concerned.

19. In his report, in document A/52/172-E/1997/71, the Secretary-General had observed that the building of settlements had accelerated since 1990. The confiscation of Arab lands for administrative and security reasons had intensified, and as a result the number of Jewish settlements and settlers in the occupied lands had risen. New geographical and demographic realities were being created which would definitely be exploited in any eventual negotiations with the Palestinians.

20. The establishment of Jewish settlements and repeated closures of the occupied areas had had serious social and economic consequences for the Palestinian people. The situation had been exacerbated as Palestinians had been prevented from going to their jobs in Israel, as a result of which the unemployment rate in Gaza was fluctuating between 50 and 60 per cent. His delegation was extremely concerned about the worsening of the situation, which also affected the inhabitants of the Syrian Golan, and for which the Israeli Government should be held fully responsible.

21. The sufferings of the Palestinian and Arab people of the occupied territories had been compounded by the exploitation of their natural resources, including land and water, by the Israeli Government. His delegation called on the Israeli Government to recognize the right of the Palestinian and Arab people to claim restitution for the exploitation, loss or depletion of their natural resources.

22. The impact of that policy on the economic and social life of the occupied territories was obvious. For example, the settlement at Jebel Abu Ghneim in East Jerusalem would seal off Jerusalem from the rest of the Palestinian land and would change the city's demographic structure in favour of the Israelis.

23. His delegation called on the Israeli Government to reconsider its current policy. Israel could not flourish at the expense of its neighbours; it should therefore abandon that policy and form a constructive partnership with the Palestinian people to achieve peace, security and prosperity in the region. The Israeli authorities must honour the commitments entered into by the preceding Government in order to put the peace process back on track. His delegation urged the friends and supporters of Israel to continue to put pressure on the Israeli Government to honour its treaty obligations. At the same time, Israel must halt its settlement activities and work for peace in the region on the basis of the "land for peace" principle.

24. **Mr. Azaiez** (Tunisia) said that the problem of the Israeli settlements in the occupied Palestinian territories, including Jerusalem, and in the other occupied Arab territories had serious consequences for the Middle East peace process. Document A/52/172-E/1997/71 cited many examples illustrating Israel's persistent application of a policy of territorial expansion and its indifference to the opinion of the international community, which was opposed to that policy.

25. The construction of Israeli settlements in the Palestinian and other Arab territories occupied since 1967 had been dealt with in a number of Security Council and General Assembly resolutions. In its resolution 446 (1979), the Security Council had determined that the policy and practices of Israel in establishing settlements in those territories had no legal validity and constituted a serious obstruction to achieving a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the Middle East. That position had been unanimously reaffirmed in Security Council resolution 465 (1980), in the preamble of which the Council had taken into account the need to consider measures for the impartial protection of private and public land and property, and water resources, and had reaffirmed that the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War, of 12 August 1949, was applicable to the Arab territories occupied by Israel since 1967, including Jerusalem. In 1980, the International Labour Conference had likewise expressed concern about settlements activities and had called for an end to that policy. The General Assembly, at its fifty-first session, had adopted resolution 51/134, in which, *inter alia*, it had expressed its concern about the continuing violation of the human rights of the Palestinian people by Israel. Moreover, in resolution 51/190, the General Assembly had drawn attention to the additional, detrimental economic and social impact of the Israeli settlements on Palestinian natural resources, and had reaffirmed the inalienable right of the Palestinian people and the population of the occupied Syrian Golan over their natural resources. Israel's decision to ignore that right was, in itself, an illegal act.

26. Despite all the pronouncements of the international community, in 1997 Israel had confiscated hundreds of hectares of Arab land in the West Bank and Jerusalem. Those confiscations had resulted in damage to the environment and the destruction of many Palestinian homes. In addition, the expropriation of land, the construction and expansion of settlements and the use of water in the occupied territories had seriously eroded the socio-economic situation of the Palestinians. Those illegal practices were the first stage of a settlement plan that contravened the provisions of a number of international instruments.

27. With respect to the health and social conditions of the Palestinians, the closure of the territory and the imposition of even tighter restrictions on the Palestinians' freedom of movement had caused an already disastrous situation to worsen. The Israeli authorities, who controlled the coast, prevented fishermen from performing their jobs, and thousands of Palestinian workers had problems going to their jobs inside Israel. Consequently, unemployment was increasing and wages were decreasing among the Palestinian population, as noted in paragraph 30 of document A/52/172-E/1997/71.

28. Those circumstances illustrated the tragic situation prevailing in the occupied Syrian Golan and the other occupied Palestinian territories. The Tunisian delegation therefore urged the Committee to continue to address the matter, emphasizing the permanent sovereignty of the Palestinian and Syrian peoples over their territories occupied by Israel.

29. Lastly, while recognizing the importance of the work done by the authors of document A/52/172-E/1997/71, Tunisia hoped that the next report on the subject would contain recommendations to facilitate the drafting of the relevant resolution, which Tunisia would co-sponsor.

30. **Mr. Zoubi** (Jordan) said that, on 26 October 1994, Jordan had signed a peace treaty with Israel which had ended long years of conflict and had laid the foundations for cooperation in a region where growth and development had been adversely affected by many years of armed conflict and war. The signing of the treaty had represented the culmination of Jordan's efforts to achieve a comprehensive, just and lasting peace.

31. The United Nations, in various resolutions, had repeatedly emphasized its position on the Israeli settlements in the Palestinian and other Arab territories occupied since 1967, including Jerusalem. He recalled, in that context, Security Council resolutions 446 (1979) of 22 March 1979 and 465 (1980) of 1 March 1980, and General Assembly resolution 51/190 of 16 December 1996.

32. Despite the international community's concern about Israel's settlements policy and the threat to peace which that policy represented, the successive Israeli Governments had never ceased their settlement activities. On the contrary, since May 1996 the settlements policy had gained momentum and the number of Israeli settlers in the occupied territories had increased considerably.

33. The Israeli settlements had had a negative impact on the economic and social conditions of the Palestinians, whose incomes had dropped sharply since the signing of the Oslo Agreement in 1993. As a result, the poverty rate had risen to 20 per cent in the West Bank and 40 per cent in the Gaza Strip. Palestinians living near the settlements were prevented from cultivating their own land and endured further restrictions on their freedom of movement, which was already limited by the Israeli Government's closure of the territory.

34. The continuation of settlement activities in all of the occupied Arab territories, including Jerusalem, could

jeopardize the ongoing peace negotiations and threaten peace in the region. Jordan reiterated its call upon the Government of Israel to stop all settlement activities and confiscations of land in the occupied territories, including Jerusalem and the Golan.

35. **Mr. Kaid** (Yemen) said that the issue of the sovereignty of the Palestinian people had been considered time and again since Israel had begun building settlements in the occupied Palestinian territories, including Jerusalem, and in the other occupied Arab territories. Many resolutions had been adopted on the subject and the international community had repeatedly condemned Israel's settlements policy, in respect of which international law was perfectly clear: that policy was an obstacle to peace. The Government of Mr. Netanyahu had perpetuated that illegal situation and had taken many illegitimate decisions to expand the settlements, *inter alia* by establishing 84 more of them in the West Bank.

36. He would like to know the reasons for Israel's attitude and the hidden motives that led it to defy universally valid resolutions. All States, especially those in the Middle East, had reason to wonder about the international community's mysterious powerlessness to secure compliance with international resolutions by a State whose population was not even half that of New York City.

37. Israeli soldiers were building with one hand and making war with the other, since they carried weapons for use against anyone who opposed their excesses. The question to be asked was whether the notion of terrorism could be applied to that type of behaviour or whether that notion was difficult to define. The question must also be asked whether the rights of Palestinians, Syrians and Lebanese should be included in human rights in general and, in that context, it would have to be determined if there were differences between the rights of some peoples and the rights of others. It was necessary to know if peace and security, and the factors that might pose a threat thereto, were subject to the same considerations everywhere in the world.

38. The population of the occupied territories was being asked to show moderation, but one needed to be realistic and ask whether moderation could be expected from the victims of the policy of forced closures, who were evicted from their land and who witnessed the destruction of their homes.

39. The delegation of Yemen took note with appreciation of the report submitted to the Committee, but must point out that it was far from comprehensive; for example, the comments on the repercussions of the Israeli occupation of the Syrian Golan were very brief.

40. **Mr. Birouk** (Algeria) reiterated his delegation's concern at the steady deterioration of the social and economic situation in the occupied Palestinian territories, caused by the policy and practices of Israel, such as the confiscation of Palestinian lands, confiscation of their property, the accelerated construction of Jewish settlements in the Arab part of Jerusalem and in the occupied Syrian Golan, the forced diversion or depletion of water resources in the Palestinian territories, the closure and impoverishing of the territories under self-rule and the obstacles of all kinds that were placed in the way of the execution of economic and social projects intended to benefit the population, all of which violated the provisions of the Charter of the United Nations, the 1949 Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War and the relevant resolutions of the General Assembly and the Security Council.

41. The Algerian delegation considered that the report prepared by the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (A/52/172) was eloquent, but could have been broader and could have contained recommendations that reflected the concerns expressed in General Assembly resolution 51/190 and in the relevant resolutions of the Economic and Social Council.

42. The paralysation of the peace process in the Middle East and of the implementation of the Agreements between Israel and the Palestinian Authority was the result of the attempt by the Government of Israel to impose a series of faits accomplis before any negotiations on the final status of Jerusalem and the other occupied Arab territories. The General Assembly's reaffirmation of the sovereignty of the Palestinian people and of the Arab population of the occupied Syrian Golan over their natural resources was an expression of the oft stated desire of the United Nations to come to the assistance of people who were deprived of their most basic rights.

43. **Mr. Hassouna** (Observer for the League of Arab States), referring to the report contained in document A/52/172, expressed the hope that the following report on the subject would consider in greater detail the issue of the sovereignty of the population of the occupied territories over their natural resources. In that connection, despite the efforts of the international community, since 1967, the Government of Israel had been pursuing its colonialist policies in the occupied territories, including Jerusalem and the Syrian Golan, against the will of the international community, in violation of the relevant resolutions and to the detriment of the peace process.

44. Israel continued to confiscate land in the West Bank and Gaza Strip and both within and outside the boundaries of the Jerusalem Municipality with the aim of changing the demographic composition of the occupied Palestinian territories. It also continued to divert watercourses in the territories, cut trees and discard waste, with harmful effects on the environment. It continued to close off the Palestinian territories under self-rule in order to consolidate the status quo prior to the start of the permanent status negotiations. Although one of the key elements of the peace process was the principle of "land for peace", there was increasing confiscation of land in the occupied territories for the purpose of expanding Israeli settlements and building roads. It should be pointed out that, since the election of the current Prime Minister, the Government of Israel had embarked on a policy of construction in zones in which a freeze had been put on the establishment of new settlements. One example of that was the Jebel Abu Ghneim project in East Jerusalem, which the Government had declared it had no intention of halting.

45. With regard to the settlements and their expansion in the occupied Golan, Israel continued its efforts to develop and expand existing settlements by offering financial and tax incentives and by increasing workplaces, particularly in tourism and agriculture.

46. Such Israeli practices clearly lacked validity and flouted the resolutions of the United Nations, in particular Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 449 (1979), 465 (1980) and 497 (1981), as well as the 1949 Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War. The situation threatened the peace process which had been launched in 1991 with the holding of the Madrid Conference and could lead only to tensions and violence for which the Government of Israel was solely responsible.

47. Special attention had been paid to that problem at the meeting of the Council of the League of Arab States, which had been held in Cairo on 20 September 1997 at the level of Ministers for Foreign Affairs. The Council had called upon Israel to abide by the resolutions concerning the Palestinian people and their sovereignty over their natural resources and to lift the restrictions imposed on the economy and on other aspects of the lives of the Palestinian population. It had also urged the international community to fulfil the commitments given to prevent the construction of settlements in the Palestinian territories and had stressed the need to implement all the resolutions on the matter, especially Security Council resolution 465 (1980) and the resolutions adopted at the tenth special session of the General Assembly. It had also emphasized that Israel's activities violated the Geneva Convention and the Agreements reached at the Madrid Peace Conference and jeopardized the peace process. Finally, it had called upon all States and international financial institutions to refrain from providing Israel with aid which it used to expand the construction of settlements in the occupied Arab territories of Palestine and the Syrian Golan.

48. The League of Arab States requested the Committee to approve the draft resolution on the sovereignty of the Palestinian population over their natural resources and called upon Israel not to exploit or to cause loss and depletion of those resources.

49. **Mr. Al-Harthy** (Oman) said that the Oslo Agreements had opened up new prospects for an improvement in the relations between Israel and its Arab neighbours based on cooperation in their mutual interest. Since the conclusion of the Agreements, the results obtained had been encouraging, namely: a peace agreement between Israel and Jordan, promising prospects for peace with Syria, the withdrawal of Israel from a number of Palestinian cities, talks with Palestinian leaders, and the holding of three summit meetings of Arab States in which Israel had participated. However, since May of the previous year, the new Government of Israel had been trying to sidestep the commitments given by the previous Government, had placed obstacles in the way of the implementation of the Agreements, had pursued its policy of constructing settlements and presenting them as faits accomplis, and had prejudged the results of the negotiations on the final status of Jerusalem.

50. Oman, which had welcomed the conclusion of the Camp David and Oslo Agreements, urged all the parties concerned, and the co-sponsoring States in particular, to encourage the peace process and to ensure that Israel respected the letter and spirit of the Oslo Agreements and other related instruments. With regard to the report contained in document A/52/172, Oman, like other delegations, was of the view that the report did not address the question of the adverse repercussions on the Arab population of the exploitation of their natural resources by the Israeli authorities and that the omission should be rectified in future reports.

51. The General Assembly had repe[illegible]med the principle of the permanent sov[illegible]eople under foreign occupation over their n[illegible]esources and its applicability to the Palestinian people and to the population of the occupied Syrian Golan and nad called upon Israel not to exploit, to cause loss and depletion of or to endanger those natural resources. It was for the international community to reiterate that position and to prevent Israel from continuing

to violate the provisions of international instruments and international law.

52. Oman wished to express its support for the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people and of the population of the occupied Syrian Golan, and to reiterate its view that Israel should withdraw from southern Lebanon, in accordance with the provisions of Security Council resolution 425 (1978).

53. **Mr. Kerem** (Israel) said that the Committee had before it a question that had been under consideration since 1947 and which could contribute very little to the advancement of the Middle East peace process. What was more serious was that its inclusion in the agenda constituted clear interference in the diplomatic process. Moreover, the document before the Committee was a classic example of how the Palestinian side used the United Nations for its own ends.

54. The question of control over natural resources was dealt with fully in the Interim Agreement on the West Bank and Gaza Strip, signed by the Government of Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization on 28 September 1995, and any consideration of that question should bear in mind the mutual commitments made under that Agreement. It stipulated that all questions, including the use of natural resources, must be resolved through negotiation. Article 31 of the Agreement stated that nothing contained in that article would prejudge the outcome of those negotiations. Logically, then, neither of the parties could renounce its rights, claims or positions. It must be clearly noted that the Interim Agreement covered powers and responsibilities and not sovereignty.

55. Thus, the powers conferred on the Palestinian Authority were necessarily limited in that area with a view to safeguarding the interests of the parties in the future negotiations on final status. As for natural resources, both parties had agreed to refrain from taking measures that could have environmental effects damaging to the other party and to observe internationally recognized norms in that area, for example, with respect to the discharge of pollutants into the atmosphere and waste treatment, and to settle the remaining questions through direct negotiations, not in Second Committee debates.

56. The report before the Committee did not offer a balanced view, nor did it make any mention at all of such issues as land use and changes in agricultural practices, the medieval practices of torture and assassination perpetrated against Palestinians who sold land to Jews, or the measures adopted by the Palestinian Parliament to prohibit such land sales. Nor did it mention the devastating effects of Palestinian terrorist acts, which disproved the good faith of the Palestinian Authority and its desire for peaceful coexistence, and which in the past year had killed 31 people, including women, children and elderly persons. Moreover, the principle of direct negotiation applied also to Syria in respect of the future of the Golan Heights. Israel awaited Syria's return to the negotiating table.

57. With regard to the Geneva Convention referred to in document A/52/172 and the relevant resolutions, it must be pointed out once again that Israel was not an occupying Power of its own will, but as a result of defending its territory against aggression. The existence of Israeli settlements represented the continuation of a presence dating from biblical times. That presence was being consolidated for security reasons in modern times and was not intended to displace the Palestinian people of those territories.

58. As the twentieth century drew to a close, no resource could be considered to be permanent; if resources were regulated in an intelligent way through the use of modern technology, they could provide many more and more diverse products. Therefore, rather than using the agenda item as a tool for incessant and belligerent propaganda, it should be considered a top priority of regional cooperation and the guarantee of a better future. Presenting preconceived images to which dates and numbers were carefully assigned was of little service to the peoples of the region.

59. **Mr. Jilani** (Observer for Palestine) said that the statement just made by the representative of Israel disregarded everything that had been said at the meeting and ignored the decisions of the international community, which had voted in favour of the resolution pursuant to which the Secretary-General's report had been issued. From Israel's point of view, the international community and the United Nations should refrain from raising the subject of Palestine and the rights of the Palestinian people; they must also avoid any condemnation of Israeli violations of international law and United Nations resolutions. Yet the Government of Israel did not refrain from violating all internationally recognized instruments, including Security Council resolutions. Thanks to its military forces and their presence in the field, Israel was perpetrating acts which jeopardized the current negotiations between the parties.

60. The representative of Israel maintained that his country was fulfilling its agreements to the letter. However, in the Secretary-General's report and the report submitted at the sixteenth special session, Israel's ongoing violations of Security Council and General Assembly resolutions and of the agreements reached had been clearly demonstrated. Israel was implementing a policy aimed at shaping events which would affect the determination of the final legal status

of Jerusalem, such as the confiscation of the identity cards of its Palestinian residents, the destruction of homes, the confiscation of land and the deportation of residents. Those were clear examples of violations of Security Council resolutions and agreements. The Secretary-General's report mentioned practices such as restrictions on freedom of movement and the cutting off of Palestinian territory that clearly violated the agreements, not to mention Israel's diversion of financial resources intended for the Palestinian Authority. On top of all that, the policy of the current Government reflected a clear rejection of the "land for peace" principle itself. The international community had declared that the actions of the Israeli Government compromised the peace process, exposing the region to an uncertain future.

The meeting rose at 4.55 p.m.